Linguistic and Geographical Survey of Ebonyi State, South East Nigeria

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Abstract
The objective of this study was to identify the major languages spoken in Ebonyi State, their dialects and geographical locations presented in a map. The survey research method was used. Data collection was carried out using personal interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) methods. Three men and three female respondents were sampled from each dialect/ethnic group using purposive random sampling and data collection sessions were recorded electronically. The data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential methods. In the results, two languages were identified in the state; the Igbo and Korin languages. The study found out that the Korin language is spoken in nine major communities and has five identifiable dialects spanning three local government areas of the state while the Igbo language is spoken in sixty eight major communities and has sixteen identifiable dialects interspaced in the thirteen local government areas of the state.
Keywords: Igbo language, Korin language, dialects, geographical locations and communities

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I.   Introduction

Linguistics is generally defined as the scientific study of human language implying that the study employs the empirical method in its research procedures. There are many branches of linguistic studies including semantics, morphology, syntax, phonology, phonetics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics with their numerous subfields. Dialectology is a sub discipline of sociolinguistics and engages itself with the study of how vocabularies, grammatical structures and prosodic features vary within a language.

Language

Language has been defined by Wardhaugh (2006:1) as "what members of a particular society speak…….. When two or more people communicate with each other in speech, we call the system of communication that they employ a code. In most cases that code will be something we may also want to call a language". It has also been said that language is a human characteristic as no other species are found to use coded language in the form that humans do. The language used by any community is usually used to identify them; sometimes the people and their language bear the same name. However, some linguists have made a distinction between what a speaker knows as his language and what he actually vocalizes as speech. Chomsky therefore distinguishes between "competence" and "performance". Competence is the knowledge of the speaker about his language. This is his imbibed judgment of what is correct and acceptable form and usage of his language. On the other hand, performance is what he actually vocalizes as his speech which may be coloured by peculiar personal characteristics and preferences, circumstances surrounding the context of the speech such as mood and the exigencies of the moment of speech resulting in the production of speech that may be at variance with what the speaker knows as the (that is "competence") correct form and usage. These fallouts and discrepancies between competence and performance contribute to the differences we find in language forms of individuals and communities of language users and ultimately result in what we call dialects or varieties of language.

Dialect

Hartman and Stork (1973:65-666) define dialect as a regional or social variety, differing in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary from the standard language which is in itself a social favoured dialect.

Dialects are the variations which are observable in the way individuals and communities use language across the different social classes and geographical locations within a language. No two individuals use language in exactly the same way. This could also extend to entire communities in such a way that members of such communities could be identified by the peculiar way they use language.

Sociolinguists studying language variation use the criteria of differences in the use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciations to delineate language varieties within a given language – dialect. However, codified languages use a specific variety of that language to carry out official functions. Such varieties do undergo certain processes before they are fitted to perform such functions. These processes include selection, codification, elaboration and acceptance. After undergoing these processes, the end product is referred to as the Standard form of that language while the rest are seen the dialects.

The selection process involves the making of a choice out of all the existing varieties on the one to be used as the official/standard form. According to Hudson (1980), this could be challenged by political interests of the speakers of the language as the chosen variety automatically enjoys a level of prestige over other varieties; a privilege which is also enjoyed by its speakers. Once a variety is selected for the purposes of standardization, the next level of codification is then embarked upon.

Codification simply implies the reduction of the language into a written form. First of all, orthography is designed as well as the rules of spelling, grammar and other graphological stipulations are laid down. These are meant to give the written form a conventional uniform format which every learner must imbibe as of necessity if he is to be literate in that language.

The chosen variety is the variety for use in all official, academic and professional fields of endeavour. As such, the variety needs to be elaborated especially at the level of vocabulary to facilitate the use of the language in all spheres of human endeavour. Language engineers embark on this aspect through metalanguage projects geared towards providing adequate terminologies in the language to fill gaps that are bound to appear as other cultures and technological advances are encountered and which need to be expressed in the language.

Before the chosen variety is recognized as the standard variety, it must be acceptable to the users of the language. Acceptability is very important because the essence of developing the variety is for it to be used by the speakers of the language as a unifying variety commonly owned by the generality of the language speakers. If it is unacceptable, the effort in developing it must have been wasted. On the other hand, if it is acceptable to them, the language gains as it is thus placed on a pedestal for sustained development of both the language, culture and indeed the people themselves. From the foregoing, in linguistic sphere, the Standard variety is the language while the other varieties are regarded as the dialects.

Objective: the objective of this paper is to find out the languages spoken in Ebonyi State and to delineate their dialects and the geographical locations where they are spoken. The work will also present the findings in a map.

II.   Methodology:

The survey study design was adopted for this work and the area of study was the geographical location designated as Ebonyi State, Nigeria comprised of thirteen Federal Government recognized local government areas. The population of Ebonyi State was put at 2,176,947 by the 2006 Nigerian census. Purposive random sampling method was used and all the language varieties identifiable in Ebonyi State were selected and five male and five female adult speakers who spoke the variety as mother tongue were sampled for each variety.

Personal Interview and Focus Group Discussion instruments were used to elicit data from the respondents. The sessions were electronically recorded with a digital video camera. The data analysis was carried out using inferential and descriptive methods.

Igbo Dialectological Studies

Dialectological studies on the Igbo Language dates back to the pre-independence period. In the 19th century, Ajayi Crowther and his translators adopted the Isuama dialect as the standard form of Igbo (Nwadike 2002). Isuama was the variety spoken by the freed Igbo slaves who were resettled in Sierra Leone following the abolition of slave trade. The variety did not gain currency among the Igbo as the standard variety because it was different from all the varieties of Igbo spoken in Igbo land. It was simply not the Igbo Language they knew as it was a mixture of different varieties just as much as the slaves could recollect. According to Nwadike (2002) many other scholars studied the dialects of Igbo but their aim was not directed towards classification but at finding a variety to adopt as the standard form.

The earliest studies of the speech form of the Abankaleke people (Ezaa, Izii, Ikwo and Ishielu) posit that their language is not Igbo language but a different language. The scholars give reasons for their assertions. One group believes that the language spoken by the Abankaleke people is not Igbo language because the sound is different from the Igbo language. Such scholars include Meier and Meier (1964- 1970) and Bendor – Samuel (1975) who wrote grammar books and translated the New Testament of the Holy Bible into Izii. Another group,

Duncan (1907) and Hoffman (1987) reason that the Abankaleke people migrated from somewhere among the Ntezi and Okpoto people (their non-Igbo speaking neighbours) to where they now occupy. They therefore argue that the Izii, Ezaa and Ikwo were not originally Igbo speaking. Their original language was of the Bantu family under which they therefore classified the language of the Abakaliki people (Anyanwu, 2005).

More recently, the classification of the Igbo Language gained the interest of notable Igbo Scholars such as Nwaozuzu (2017) and Ikekeonwu (1987). Ikekeonwu carried out a linguistic and geographical classification of the Igbo Language. In the study, a total of six dialect clusters were identified namely;
- Northern/Waawa Igbo (N/WI) with varieties spoken in Enugu, Nkanu, Nsukka, Awgu, Udi, Achi, Abakaliki and so on.

- Niger Igbo (NI) with varieties spoken in Asaba, Agbor, Ukwuali and so on.
- Inland West Igbo (IWI) with varieties spoken in Onitsha, Awka, Aguata and so on.
- Inland East Igbo (IEI) with varieties spoken in Umuahia, Orlu, Owerri, Ngwa and so on.
- Aro Igbo (AI) with varieties spoken in Arochukwu and other Aro settlements.
- Riverain Igbo (RI) with varieties spoken in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Varieties spoken in Ebonyi State were classified under the Northern/Waawa Igbo under this classification.
In Nwaozuzu (2017) Igbo Language was generally classified into eight dialect groups;
- West Niger Group of Dialects (WNGD)
- East Niger Group of Dialects (ENGD)
- East Central Group of Dialects (ECGD)
- Cross River Group of Dialects (CRGD)
- South Eastern Group of Dialects (SEGD)
- North Eastern Group of Dialects (NEGD)
- South Western Group of Dialects (SWGD)
- Northern Group of Dialects (NGD)

The above classifications were carried out to give a general overview of dialect groupings across the Igbo speaking people of Nigeria. The individual dialect clusters were therefore not further delineated into specific dialects. This study therefore carried out a linguistic and geographical classification of languages and their dialects spoken in Ebonyi State which was furthermore used to draw a language map of the State.

From the foregoing, the existing classification of Igbo dialects lumped varieties into clusters. As such, the individual dialects are yet to be delineated. This attempt therefore tries to delineate the individual languages and dialects spoken in only one state of the Igbo speaking states of Nigeria which forms only a part of what was differently classified as Northern Waawa Igbo (N/WI) or Northern Group of Dialects (NGD) in previous classifications.

Other scholars recently worked on the language varieties spoken in Ebonyi state. These include Obianika (2012), Iloene (2014) and Aṅasi (2020).

Obianika (2012) carried out a research on the interface of tone and morphology in Izii and Ezaa dialects to find out the peculiarity of tonal behavior in these dialects and using perceptual and acoustic methods to find out the fact in the suspicion that the presence of the upstep tone in these dialects was responsible for the peculiarity perceived in their speech form. In the findings, the upstep tone was not perceived in the data collected and analyzed rather some tonal and syllabic features which were not common in other Igbo dialects were perceived; the high raising tone in addition to closed syllables in the Izii and Ezaa dialects and consonant clusters in the Ezaa dialect. The work asserts based on these findings, that there are closed syllables and consonant clusters in the Igbo language after all howbeit in the dialects. Finally, the study concluded that from the evidence presented in the findings including the consonantal, vocalic, tonal, lexical as well as morphological variation between the dialects and the Standard Igbo were not significant enough to classify the Izii and Ezaa speech forms as separate linguistic systems from the Igbo language.

Iloene (2014) carried out an elemental and acoustic analysis of the Korin language syllable structure. The elemental and acoustic methods of analysis were employed and the Praat Speech Analysis software was used. In the findings, Korin language has ten vowel phonemes and thirty consonants. Among other things, the Korin language was found to have a V, CV and CVC core syllable structure and that it allows an optional consonant cluster at the onset and minimally at the coda.

In Aṅasi (2020), an acoustic analysis was carried out on obstruents in three Igbo dialects of Aro, Mgbo and Izii to identify, characterize and find out the manner of relatedness of theses obstruents in the dialects. In the findings, Mgbo had twenty seven obstruents, Aro dialect had nineteen obstruents while Izii had twenty eight. The study also found out that the three dialects have the core syllable structures, V, and CV while the CVC structure is only exclusive to Mgbo and Izhi and concluded among other things that the obstruents across the three dialects are to a large extent related.

Linguistic and geographical survey of Ebonyi State
The results and analyses of the survey carried out are presented as follows;
Linguistic survey
The result shows that there are two languages spoken in Ebonyi state; Igbo and Korin.
Korin language
Korin has five dialects spoken in nine major communities spread across three local government areas; Ishielu, Ohaukwu and Ezaa North Local Government Areas. These are presented in Table 1; **Dialects of Korin Language**

S/N	Dialects		Communities spoken in	Local Government Area
	Official Name	**Name Used by the Speakers**		
1.	Ntezi	Eteji	1. Ulepa 2. Agaga 3. Amata	Ishielu
2.	Okpoto	Kilame	Babara	1. Ishielu
3.	Amuda	Idzem	1. Ojolokpa 2. Ojemjem	Ezaa North
4.	Effium	Uffium	1. Inikiri 2. Effium	Ohaukwu
5.	Okpomoro	Okpoghoro	Okpomoro	Ezaa North

Table 1 showing the Dialects of Korin Language the communities and Local Government Areas they are spoken in.

These dialects are spoken in at least one community but some have more number of speakers and are spoken in wider geographical areas than others. Ntezi (Eteji) is clearly the most widely spoken of all the dialects and has more number of speakers.

It is worthy to note the influence of the Igbo language on Korin. All of the people interviewed also speak Igbo and bear Igbo names as personal names, surnames or both. These names could be provided here but for purposes of anonymity which the research team and the respondents consented to.

The Igbo language
Sixteen dialects of Igbo are spoken in the rest of Ebonyi state and are presented in Table 2.
Dialects of Igbo Language in Ebonyi State

S/N	Dialects		Major Communities spoken in	Local Government Area
1.	**Agba**		1. **Agba**	
2.	Afikpo	Ehugbo	1. Ụkpa 2. Mkpoghọrọ 3. Ndibe 4. Amụrọ 5. Mgbom 6. Oziza 7. Enọhịa	Afikpo North
3.	Eda	Eda	1. OwutuEda 2. EkoliEda 3. NguzuEda 4. EtitiEda 5. Oso 6. Amangwu 7. Amoso 8. Ebunwana 9. Amaiyi 10. Ekeje	Afikpo South
4.	Ezaa	Ezaa	1. Orieuzo 2. Umuezeokoha 3. Umuezeoka 4. Ogbooji 5. Umuoghara 6. Eka 7. Amuzu 8. Abaomege 9. Idembia 10. Amuda 11. Amorie 12. Ameke 13. Amana	

			14.	Nsukala	
			15.	Echara	
			16.	Amegu/Amezekwe	
			17.	Ukawu	
5.	Ezamgbo	Ezamgbo	1.	Ezamgbo	
			2.	Izhia	
			3.	Ishieke	
6.	Ezilo	Ezilo	1.	Ezilo	
7.	Ikwo	Ikwo	1.	Echara	
			2.	Alike	
			3.	Mgbabu	
			4.	Umuaka	
			5.	Okpuitumo	
8.	Isiagu	Isiagu	1.	Isiagu	
			2.	Akaeze	
			3.		
9.	Izii	Izii	1.	Igbeagu	
			2.	Agbaja	
			3.	Isieke	
			4.	Mdgalukwu	
			5.	Ezaainyimagu	
			6.	Nkaliki	
			7.	Idembia	
			8.	Ndieze	
			9.	Amachi	
			10.	Okpuitumo	
			11.	Iziiunuhu	
			12.	Eda	
10.	Mgbo	Mgbo	1.	Mgbo	
11.	Nkalagu	Nkalagu	1.	Nkalagu	
12.	Nkaleha	Nkaleha	1.	Nkaleha	
13.	Obeagu	Obeagu	1.	Obeagu	
14.	Oshiri	Oshiri	1.	Oshiri	
15.	Uburu	Uburu	1.	Uburu	
			2.	Onicha	
			3.	Isu	
			4.	Ngwulangwu	
			5.	Okposi	
16.	Umuhuali	Umuhuali	1.	Umuhuali	

Table 2 showing Dialects of the Igbo Language, the major towns spoken in and their Local Government Areas.

MAP OF EBONYI STATE; LGAs AND COMMUNITIES
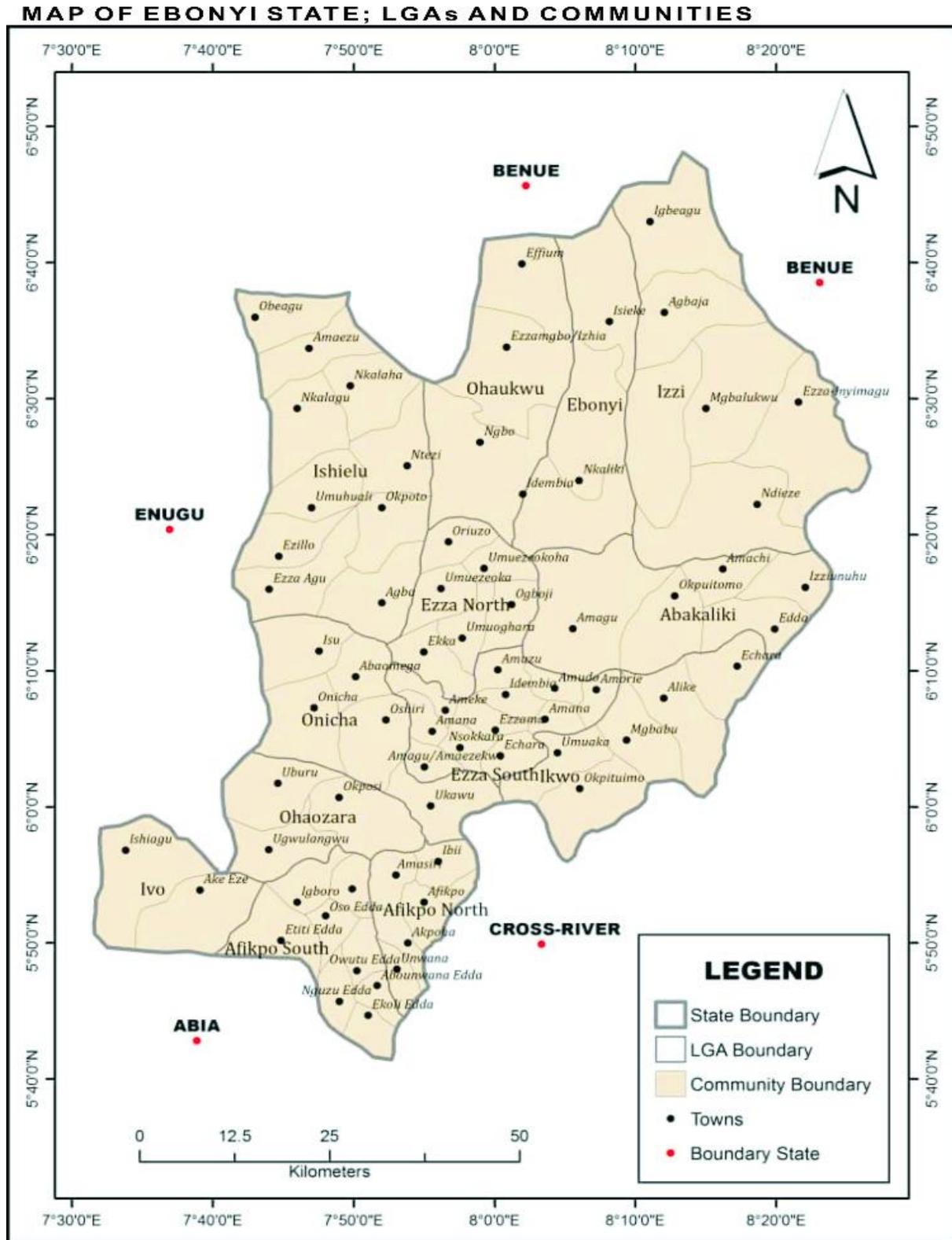
Figure 1 showing Ebonyi State local governments and major communities

Geographical Survey

The Igbo dialects are spoken in identifiable geographical locations and were indicated in the maps. Some are spoken in larger geographical areas than the others. Ezaa dialect appears to be peculiar in a number of ways.

Firstly, Ezaa is spoken in a larger geographical area than any of the other dialects and could possibly have more number of speakers. Most strikingly, it is the exclusive dialect spoken in two Local Government

Areas and could be seen as indicated in the maps that it is spoken among at least seven other dialect speaking communities and among the Korin language speakers.

The respondents explained this phenomenon by the fact that Ezaa people were historically warlike people and were engaged by other peoples as security allies. Part of these pacts was that they were positioned at the out skirts of these communities to act as shield to the hosts. They settled and lived among these communities for decades and over the years, most of them never went back to their original homes. They however have maintained their dialects in those communities where they lived. There is no particular area of land or whole village that could be designated as Ezaa in those communities but they form an integral part of the communities. This is indicated on the map in **Figure 2** with the Ezaa dotted area spreading into the other dialect areas.
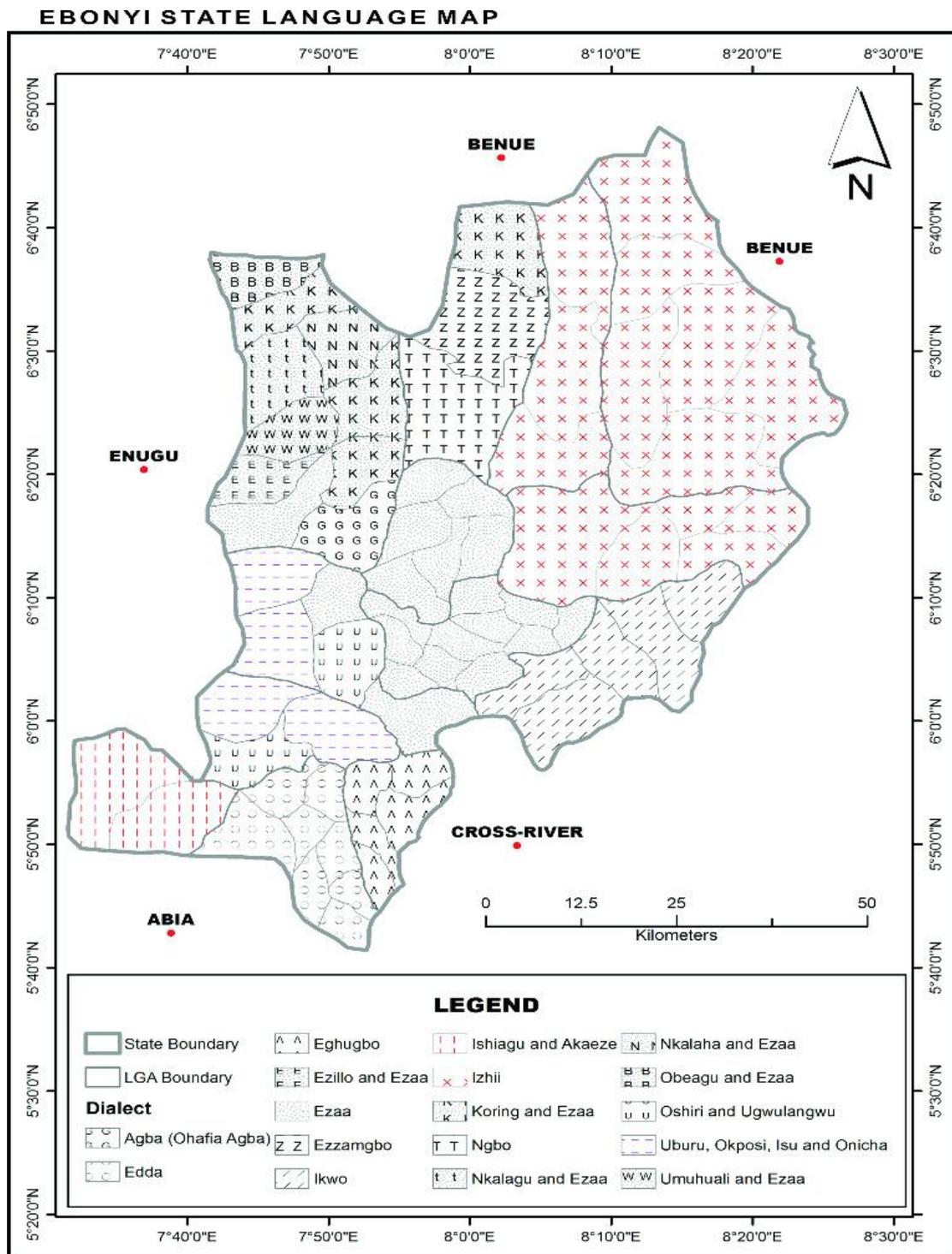

Figure 2 showing the languages and the dialects of Igbo of Ebonyi State

It was the objective of the research to carry out a linguistic and geographical study of the state. The implication of this is that the varieties of languages spoken were not only identified but also the geographical areas where they are spoken were also mapped out.

The local government areas were first enumerated and their headquarters indicated (**Table 1 and figure 1**). The motive was to give an overview of the area of study. A total of thirteen local government areas were enumerated. The development centres were not taken into consideration for the obvious reason that they are not among those recognized by the federal government.

Some of these local government areas such asIzii, Ikwo, Uburu/Ohaozara and Afikpo roughly align with the ethnic groups that bear these names as their dialects. However, some others are more mixed up with other ethnic groups that it would be very misleading to classify the dialects along local government boundaries. Such local government areas include Ezaa North and South, Onicha and Ishielu Local Government Areas. For instance, Ishielu and Ezaa North Local Government Areas even have speakers of Korin, a different language altogether within their boundaries. There was need therefore to indicate local government areas and their headquarters before indicating the dialects and their geographical locations.

The dialects of Igbo and Korin languages and the communities where they are spoken were then presented in **Table 2 and Figure 2**. The dialects represent to a large extent the various ethnic groups/nations in the state. However, the import of the geographical locations of the dialects is that it graphically portrays the fact that these dialects are interwoven in terms of the geographical spaces they occupy. In one geographical location, a number of dialects co-exist and each still maintains its uniqueness. In Ishielu Local Government Area for instance (**Figure 2 refers**) one finds a number of the dialects and the Korin Language co-existing. There are Obeagu, Korin Language, Nkalagu, Nkaleha, Umuhuali, Agba, Ezilo and Ezaa dialects co-existing. The dotted legend runs through all the dialects indicating that the Ezaa dialect speakers are also living among all other dialect speakers in the Local Government Area except Agba dialect. It is also worth pointing out that Amuda dialect speakers of Korin Language live in Ohaukwu Local Government Area separated by two other dialects of Igbo speakers; Ezamgbo and Mgbo. All these features have their political undertone and existential implications for the peace, security and development of the people and their environment.

III.   Summary and Conclusion

The study identified two distinct languages spoken in Ebonyi State, Nigeria; Korin and Igbo languages. The Korin language has six dialects while the Igbo language has sixteen dialects. Speakers of the two languages live within communities in close proximity as portrayed in the language map in Table 2. The study therefore upholds the earlier dialectological studies on Ebonyi State which classified their speech form as a dialect cluster of the Igbo language as against those who classified them as a separate linguistic system. It also reiterates that a small population of speakers interspacing three local government areas of the state, speak a different language – Korin.

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Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions
A. **Metadata on language**
1. Investigator's Name _

2. Investigator's address _

3. Informant's name _

4. Informant's age (or approximate age) _

5. Informant's language/dialect _

(a) Official name _

(b) Name used by the speakers_ _

6. What other languages/dialects does the speaker speak? - ---

7. Informant's home town or village _

8. How long has the informant lived in home town/village _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

9. Where is this town

(a) List the nearest larger town or village_ _
(b)Name the local government area_ _
(c)Name the state _
(d) Name the country
10. Name by which speakers are known _
(a) Officially_ _

(b) By themselves _
11. Does the language/dialect have a written form? _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

12. If it doesn't, name the language whose spelling is taken as the basis for the spelling of the words in the list (e.g. English, Igbo, Hausa etc) _

13. What other towns (or LGAs,) speak the same language/dialect as the informant's town? _

EBONYI STATE LANGUAGE VARIATION RESEARCH PROJECT

Appendix 2: Sample of the informed consent form:

EBONYI STATE UNIVERSITY ABAKALIKI NIGERIA

In Collaboration with TETFund

E-mail: ebolangresearchproject@gmail.com

DATE...................................

PMB 053 Abakaliki
Ebonyi State, Nigeria

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The above research team is carrying out a research titled ***Implementation of Coping Strategies for the Effects of Language Variation on Development in Ebonyi State, Nigeria***. It is studying the effects of different interest groups especially the ethnic groups represented in Ebonyi state on the rate of development of the state. They want to find out the expectations of these peoples from their local and state governments and with these findings advice the governments and the different ethnic groups on the roles each of them should play to have good cooperation among themselves and with the governments for rapid development to take place in the state and local governments.

We will therefore need to ask you some questions about yourself, your language, your people and community. We will record your answers in video and pictures and use them for this research in the interest of the state and her citizens. But you have the right to accept this request or not to. We want you to decide by yourself. You can also ask us questions on what we have explained if you need to. If there are conditions under which we want us to work with you for this project also tell us for our consideration.

If you are satisfied with our explanation and would want to participate in this research, kindly read and sign the consent below;

The members of the above research team have fully explained to me the motive of their research and the implications of my participation in the research. I therefore give my full consent to participate in respect of the research titled**: *Implementation of Coping Strategies for the Effects of Language Variation on Development in Ebonyi State, Nigeria*. (Ref No: EBSU/TETFund/IBR/2018/024)**

Signed;